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File

10 February 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Carter

Two subjects on which we must reach an agreed policy decision are (a) the surfacing of the OX and (b) the management of NRO.

With reference to the former, I reviewed the "visibility" of the OX on Friday. I find that Drs. Wheelon and Maxie are agreed that the improved Soviet radar capability makes the OX visible both to the long range search radar and the radars associated with the surface-to-air missile systems. Therefore it is impossible to fly the OX over Soviet territory without detection. Originally it was thought -- and as recently as 18 months ago -- that the Soviet radar would not pick up the OX. The findings of Dr. Wheelon disprove this and this fact bears heavily on the future use of the OX.

If the decision is made by higher authority not to use the OX for the purposes originally planned -- i.e., clandestine surveillance of the Soviet Union -- then it must be considered as a "quick reaction" surveillance asset to be used in times of danger, under circumstances of heightened tension, with the full appreciation of the risks and the provocations.

This raises the question of whether in its reconnaissance configuration it should continue as a CIA asset or be turned over to the Air Force. This question must be examined carefully and, quite naturally, the use of the OXCART over non-Soviet denied territory such as Communist China, Southeast Asia and even Cuba should be taken into consideration.

The above problem is one of the important questions associated with surfacing the OX ~~but is not~~ probably the most important long term question from the standpoint of CIA, our budget, etc.

I feel it must at some time be surfaced because of the military versions. Also we are sure to have an accident or forced landing at a public airport, or a "leak", which will have the effect of surfacing. Timing is of importance as well as method, and these should be studied and an in-house decision reached for guidance in talking with the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and Director, NRO and higher authority.

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The second question is the management of NRO. My last discussion with a representative of DoD was with Fubini about three weeks ago at which time he drafted a memo which I felt outlined a very sensible plan. I understand it has run into some difficulties with McMillan and also I note Dr. Wheelon's alternate proposal.

I would like to reach an in-house agreement as to what part, if any, CIA must play in the operation of proven article, the technical improvements of such an article in order to produce better quality product and the development of a new generation search and spotting satellite to give the ultimate resolution.

Since both Fubini and McMillan want to see me early this week, the above should be discussed at this afternoon's meeting.

  
JOHN A. McCONE

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